

Administration of Barack H. Obama, 2009

Remarks at a Welcoming Ceremony for Prime Minister Manmohan Singh of India

November 24, 2009

Prime Minister Singh, Mrs. Gursharan Kaur, members of the Indian delegation, on behalf of Michelle and myself, it is a great pleasure to welcome you to the White House. On behalf of the American people, it is my great honor you—to welcome you to the United States.

Mr. Prime Minister, yours is the first official state visit of my Presidency, and it is fitting that you and India be so recognized. This visit reflects the high esteem in which I and the American people hold your wise leadership. It reflects the abiding bonds of respect and friendship between our people, including our friends in the Indian American community who join us here today.

But above all, your visit, at this pivotal moment in history, speaks to the opportunity before us to build the relationship between our nations, born in the last century, into one of the defining partnerships of the 21st century.

For while our two nations have taken different paths to reach this moment, ours is a common story. It's the story of two proud people who struggled to break free from an empire and declare their independence. Two bold experiments with—in democracy with Constitutions that begin with the same simple words: We the people. Two great republics dedicated to the ideals of liberty, justice, equality, and the never-ending work of perfecting their union.

It's the story of two economic marvels fueled by an ethic of hard work and innovation. And today, our nations are two global leaders, driven not to dominate other nations, but to build a future of security and prosperity for all nations. Mr. Prime Minister, as we work to build that future, India is indispensable.

As leading economies, the United States and India can strengthen the global economic recovery, promote trade that creates jobs for both our people, and pursue growth that is balanced and sustained.

As nuclear powers, we can be full partners in preventing the spread of the world's most deadly weapons, securing loose nuclear materials from terrorists, and pursuing our shared vision of a world without nuclear weapons.

As people who've known the pain and anguish of terrorism, we can stand together, cooperating to prevent future attacks and promote the development and prosperity that undermines violent extremism.

As India becomes an increasingly influential global power, we can partner to meet other transnational challenges: developing clean energy partnerships, confronting climate change, stopping infectious disease, reducing hunger, and working to end extreme poverty in our time.

And as the world's largest democracies, we can keep faith with our common values: speaking out and standing up for the rights and dignity to which all human beings are entitled and showing that nations that respect the rights and aspirations of their people are, ultimately, more stable, more secure, and more successful.

This is the India that America welcomes today, a leader in Asia and around the world. These are the challenges we are summoned to meet in partnership. This is the progress that is possible today and in the days and years ahead.

And, Mr. Prime Minister, as we build our common future, we can draw strength from our shared past. For it was exactly 60 years ago, in a ceremony not unlike this, that an American President welcomed to the White House the first Prime Minister of an independent India. And while the decades that followed were not without their challenges, the spirit of that first visit is with us today, the same sense of possibility, the same hope for the future.

So as President Truman said of President [Prime Minister]^{*} Nehru, it is my privilege to welcome "the respected leader of a great nation of free people." And as Prime Minister Nehru said of the work before them, may our two great nations "find many ways of working together in friendly and fruitful cooperation to our mutual advantage, and for the good of humanity."

Mr. Prime Minister, Mrs. Kaur, in that spirit, I welcome you to the United States of America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the East Room at the White House, where Prime Minister Singh was accorded a formal welcome with full military honors. In his remarks, he referred to Gursharan Kaur, wife of Prime Minister Singh. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Singh.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : India, Prime Minister Singh.

Locations: Washington, DC.

Names: Kaur, Gursharan; Obama, Michelle; Singh, Manmohan.

Subjects: Arms and munitions : Nuclear weapons and material :: Nonproliferation efforts; Commerce, international : Global financial markets :: Stabilization efforts; Developing countries : Health and medical care, promotion efforts; Developing countries : Poverty; Energy : Alternative and renewable sources and technologies; Environment : Climate change ; India : Prime Minister; India : Relations with U.S.; Terrorism : Global threat.

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^{*} White House correction.